



On Campus with Max Shulman

(Author of "Barefoot Boy With Cheek," etc.)

LOVE IN REVERSE

They were at the campus swimming pool. She was standing on the diving board—lithe, young, vibrant. He came swimming over. "Hey," he called, climbing up on the board, "was it you who made that dive a minute ago?"

She nodded—lithe, young, vibrant.

"Whew!" he whistled. "That was some dive! A back jackknife two and a half twist full gainer swan. Where did you learn to dive like that?"

"I fell off the board," she explained.

"Oh," he said. He looked at her—lithe, young, vibrant. "Let's go steady," he said.

"But I don't know anything about you," she said.

"What's there to know?" he said. "I'm a typical American college man—young, healthy, and broke."

"That's good enough for me," she said, "for I am not interested in money. I am a girl of simple tastes—lithe, young, vibrant."

"Dad!" he whispered.

"Crazy!" she breathed.

Their lips met. Their arms twined. They fell off the board.

"If you only knew," he said later, as he applied artificial respiration, "how long I have been looking for a lithe, young, vibrant girl of simple tastes, for though my heart is large and full of love, my purse is lean and meagre. My cruel father sends me an allowance barely large enough to support life. So I have been looking high and low for a girl of simple tastes."

"Search no more," she said. "My tastes are simple; my wants are few. Just take me riding in a long, sleek, new yellow convertible, and I am content."

"Goodbye," he said and ran away as fast as his chubby little legs could carry him, for he knew this girl was not for the likes of him. He had neither convertible nor hardtop, nor the money to buy one, nor the means to get the money, short of picking up his stingy father by the ankles and shaking him till his wallet fell out. No, there was nothing for it except to forget this girl.

But lying on his pallet at the dormitory, he could not get her out of his mind and finally he knew that whatever the expense, he had to have her—lithe, young, vibrant.

So he sold a few things—his textbooks, his overcoat, his hi-Y pin, his roommate's trunks—and soon he had accumulated a goodly sum. He went to a place that sold automobiles. "How much does it cost," he said, "to buy a yellow convertible automobile?"

The man told him. He collapsed in a gibbering heap.

After a while he stirred and shambled home. But on the way he passed a place with a big sign that said: RENT A CAR—DRIVE YOURSELF. Hope came into our hero's eyes. He went inside. "How much does it cost," he said, "to rent a yellow convertible automobile?"

"Ten dollars a day, plus seven cents a mile," said the man.

"Done and done," said our hero, and soon he drove away in a long, sleek, new, yellow convertible.

"Oh, goody!" said the lithe, young, vibrant girl when she saw the car. "This suits my simple tastes to a T. Come, let us speed over rolling highways and through bosky dells."

And away they went. They drove north, they drove south, they drove fast, they drove slow, they drove east, they drove west, they drove and drove and drove and, finally, tired but happy, they parked high on a windswept hill.

"Philip Morris!" he said.

"Yum, yum!" she said.

They lit up. She snuggled against him. "You know," he said, "you are like a Philip Morris—mild and fresh and relaxing."

"But there is a big difference between me and Philip Morris," said she. "They're available in king-size and regular, and I am only available in regular."

They laughed. They kissed. He screamed.

"What is it, dear man?" cried she, alarmed.

"The speedometer," he said. "I just noticed. We put on 200 miles tonight, and this car costs seven cents a mile, and I have only \$14 left."

"But that's exactly enough," she said.

"Yes," he said, "but we still have to drive home, and that will put a lot more miles on the car. Where will I get the money to pay for that?"

"Gee, I don't know," said she.

"Me neither," he said glumly. He started the motor and backed out of the parking place.

"Hey, look!" said the girl. "The speedometer doesn't move when you're backing up."

He looked. It was true. Mileage only registered when the car was moving forward—not in reverse. "Eureka!" he said. "That's it!"

"Do you mean—" said she.

"Exactly!" said he. "I will drive home in reverse. Then no more miles will register and I'll have enough money to pay!"

"I think that's a George idea!" she cried, and she was right. Because today our hero is in the county jail where food, clothes, and lodging are provided free of charge, and his allowance is piling up fast. By the time his sentence is ended, he should have enough to take his girl out riding again.

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